

Pharmaceutical Independence: How Local Drug Manufacturing is Reshaping Africa's Medical Supply Chain



Africa's reliance on imported medicines—up to 70% in many countries—has long exposed the continent to supply chain disruptions, price volatility, and limited access to essential drugs. The COVID-19 pandemic made these vulnerabilities even more apparent, as global shortages and export restrictions threatened the availability of life-saving treatments across Africa.

In response, a movement toward pharmaceutical self-reliance has gained momentum, with countries like Kenya emerging as regional leaders in local drug manufacturing. One of the key drivers of this transformation is [Jayesh Saini](#), founder of Dinlas Pharma, whose large-scale production capacity and distribution network are helping Kenya reduce its dependency on imports and build a more resilient and accessible healthcare system.

This article explores the importance of local pharmaceutical production in reshaping Africa's medical supply chain, focusing on Kenya's progress and the role of Dinlas Pharma in delivering high-quality, affordable medicines across the region.

1. The Challenge: Africa's Dependency on Imported Medicines

1.1 Scope of the Problem

- Over **70% of Africa's pharmaceutical needs** are met through imports, primarily from India, China, and Europe.

- Countries face frequent **stockouts, long procurement cycles, and inflated costs** due to international shipping, currency fluctuations, and import taxes.
- During global crises, **low-income countries are deprioritized** in drug exports, leading to dangerous shortages.

1.2 Implications for Public Health

- **Delayed treatments** for chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cancer.
- **High costs** passed down to patients and healthcare systems.
- Inability to **respond quickly to health emergencies** or outbreaks due to lack of local manufacturing capacity.

2. Kenya's Rise as a Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Hub

2.1 Government Commitment and Industry Growth

Kenya has prioritized local pharmaceutical production through:

- The **Health Sector Strategic Plan** and **Big Four Agenda**, which promote industrial growth in health
- Tax incentives and regulatory support for **Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP)**-compliant facilities
- Integration of local products into **public procurement and NHIF-covered services**

This policy environment has enabled companies like **Dinlas Pharma** to thrive and scale production for domestic and regional needs.

3. Dinlas Pharma: Driving Pharmaceutical Independence

Founded by healthcare entrepreneur **Jayesh Saini**, **Dinlas Pharma** is one of Kenya's most advanced pharmaceutical manufacturers.

3.1 Scale of Production

Dinlas Pharma produces:

- **140 million tablets/month**
- **25 million capsules/month**

- **1 million bottles of syrups and suspensions/month**
- **0.8 million tubes of creams and ointments/month**

This high-volume output supports:

- Public hospitals and NHIF-accredited facilities
- Private clinics and pharmacies
- Humanitarian and community health programs

3.2 Affordable and Accessible Medicines

By **manufacturing generics locally**, Dinlas Pharma helps:

- **Reduce medicine costs** by eliminating import duties and transport costs
- Ensure **steady supply of chronic disease medications**
- Expand **access to essential treatments** in rural and underserved areas

Jayesh Saini's model focuses on **affordability without compromising quality**, ensuring that healthcare remains accessible for all income groups.

3.3 Regional Distribution and Growth Plans

- Dinlas has a growing distribution network reaching **all 47 counties in Kenya**
- Plans are underway to expand exports to **Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and South Sudan**
- The company is also investing in **R&D for new generic formulations and fixed-dose combinations**, targeting local disease burdens

4. Strengthening the Supply Chain Through Local Production

4.1 Building Supply Resilience

Local pharmaceutical production:

- Minimizes disruption from global supply chain shocks
- Improves **stock management for essential drugs**

- Enables faster response to disease outbreaks and health emergencies

4.2 Enhancing Public Sector Procurement

With consistent production, Dinlas Pharma is well-positioned to support:

- **Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) tenders**
- **County government procurement systems**
- **Emergency health kits and essential medicine baskets**

This **in-country sourcing** model can greatly improve the efficiency and transparency of public health supply chains.

5. Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Opportunities:

- **Regional harmonization** of pharmaceutical regulations through EAC and AfCFTA
- **Technology transfer partnerships** with global manufacturers
- Increased **investment in biotechnology, vaccine production, and diagnostic kits**

Challenges:

- High cost of importing **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)**
- Need for **stronger regulatory oversight and post-market surveillance**
- Limited technical workforce and specialized pharmaceutical training programs
- Dependency on **external funding for R&D**

To overcome these challenges, Kenya must continue to invest in **infrastructure, policy incentives, and skills development**, while leveraging the capabilities of leading manufacturers like Dinlas Pharma.

Conclusion

Africa's future in healthcare cannot rely on imports alone. Pharmaceutical independence is essential for health security, affordability, and equity—and Kenya is taking bold steps in this direction.

Thanks to visionary leaders like [Jayesh Saini](#), companies like Dinlas Pharma are proving that local manufacturing is not only possible—it's scalable, sustainable, and transformative. By producing affordable medicines at scale, building regional distribution networks, and aligning with national health goals, Dinlas Pharma is reshaping Kenya's role in Africa's pharmaceutical supply chain.

With continued investment, supportive policy, and regional cooperation, Kenya can lead the continent in creating a healthcare system that is truly African-built, African-owned, and African-powered.